TL1711-10

SUBMISSION TO THE
UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION
NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1991

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates:

My name is Jeffrey Rudolph. I am here to represent the East Timor Alert Network which includes a broad range of Canadians who want to see the wrong done to the East Timorese People, directly by Indonesia and indirectly by Canada and other states, rectified.

Mr. Chairman:

The essence of Canada's wrong is not in remaining silent but in actively assisting Indonesia to carry out its genocidal policies by providing diplomatic, economic and military support. Indeed, Canada has been one of Indonesia's main supporters throughout its war against the East Timorese. While Canada has cultivated an image within the UN and throughout the Third World as a purveyor of peace and justice, its actions in regard to East Timor belie this image.

While before 1980 Canada abstained on UN resolutions concerning East Timor, since that time Canada has voted against UN resolutions calling for the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian troops and the right of self-determination for the East Timorese. Additional diplomatic support has been provided through Canada's efforts to have the East Timor issue removed from UN agendas, including the Human Rights Commission. While recently the Canadian delegation at the Human Rights Commission expressed its concern over continued "allegations" of human rights abuses in East Timor, meaningful efforts by Canada to arrest such abuses are nowhere in evidence.

Through its actions, Canada has essentially accepted the illegal annexation of East Timor as the 27th province of Indonesia. This behaviour is blatantly inconsistent with Canada's principled stand with respect to Iraq's illegal annexation of Kuwait; and, more recently, with Canada's decision to contribute 740 troops to the UN peacekeeping operation in the Western Sahara which will last until a national referendum is held to determine

whether the population of the former Spanish colony favours independence from or integration with Morocco. Canada's consistent attitude has been that there is no point badgering Indonesia since the situation in East Timor is irreversible. If this is so, it is only because of the complicity of states such as Canada.

Canada has been a generous provider of economic support to the Indonesian military dictatorship. Indeed, Indonesia is the third largest recipient of Canadian aid dollars, having received $350 million in unconditional bilateral aid since 1987. Such generosity goes back at least to 1975. Soon after the invasion of East Timor, president Suharto visited Canada and came away with a $200 million mixed aid and loan agreement. And, in 1985, Canada gave $23 million in aid. Unquestionably, such Canadian largesse has enhanced Indonesia's ability to subdue East Timor.

Canada's refusal to attach human rights criteria to its aid to Indonesia is sadly ironic since the linkage of development assistance to human rights performance --Canada's ostensible policy--was first apparent with Indonesia in the 1960's. In response to Sukarno's confrontation with Malaysia, Canadian food aid was terminated for a two-year period and no new capital projects or commodity shipments occurred in 1965/66 as Indonesia was violating its neighbour's territorial sovereignty and its neighbour's inhabitants right to self-determination. Howèver, it is now apparent that Canada adopted this principled stand since the economic costs were low. Due to the relatively closed and depressed state of the economy under Sukarno, the West was not deeply involved in commercial relations with Indonesia. This situation changed dramatically with the 1965 coup and Indonesia's reorientation towards the West. Hence, since the coup, while Indonesia's human rights record has deteriorated Canada's prior linkage ended.

By the time of the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor, Canada was a major investor in Indonesia. As such, Canada had an opportunity to exert some degree of restraining influence on its economic partner. Unfortunately, Canada did not use that opportunity. Instead our then-ambassador to Indonesia, Glen Shortcliffe, advised that Canada recognize the takeover as a *fait accompi*. Mr. Shortcliffe also pointed out that this would result in greater benefits to Canadian companies and improve trading relations with Indonesia. In fact this proved to be an accurate judgment as Canadian business has continued to benefit from

foreign direct investment, licensing agreements, trade and debt repayments. However, the case of South Africa shows how powerful even imperfect economic sanctions can be in compelling a brutal regime to change.

More than 300 Canadian companies, attracted by cheap and plentiful resources, low-wage labour, protected markets and free profit and capital repatriation, are active in Indonesia. Heading the list of investors is INCO, owner of a billion-dollar mining and smelter complex in the jungles of Sulawesi. Canadian business is also active in manufacturing, oil and gas and financial services. Besides enjoying good returns, such companies help maintain Canada's healthy trade surplus with Indonesia. While the U.S. is still Canada's main trading partner by a huge margin, in the 1980's Asia passed Europe to become Canada's next largest market. Complicity over East Timor is a tragic byproduct of this larger Asian picture.

That profits to Canadian business have been the essential determinant of Canada's policy towards Indonesia is seen from the fact that Canada has been willing to show some independence from the U.S.-foreign policy line when some economic advantage existed. The cases of Canada's relations to Cuba and China are two prominent examples. Hence, while Canada generally follows U.S. instructions, it ensures that its economic interests are well served.

The huge loss of life in East Timor during Indonesia's illegal aggression would not have been possible without the supply of military equipment to Indonesia by many Western states including Canada. Canada generally undertakes promotional programs to assist and to facilitate the sale of military commodities to the Third World. In fact Indonesia has sometimes been a subject of particular interest for such sales because it is considered to be a key buyer within the Pacific Rim. For example, in 1984 Canada sponsored a military trade fair in Indonesia.

Although Canadian Government policy forbids military sales to "countries involved in or under imminent threat of hostilities" and "countries whose governments have a persistent record of serious violations of human rights, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable risk that the goods might be used against a civilian population," Canada has sold and continues to authorize the sale of weapons to Indonesia--a state which violates both conditions.

Canadian companies selling military commodities to Indonesia include Pratt and Whitney Canada (the world's largest manufacturer of helicopter engines and largest recipient of government military largesse through the Defence Industry Productivity Programme), the de Havilland division of Boeing of Canada, Canadair and General Motors of Canada.

Essentially, Canada has shown itself to be willing to export as many military commodities to Indonesia as Canadian manufacturers can get sales. Hence, the only factor hindering Canadian sales is intense competition from other states, not ethical policy.

Canada is understandably interested in increasing all-manner of exports to the Pacific Rim as this benefits its domestic economy. Therefore, one reason why Canada is reluctant to follow its own policy and impose restrictions on military sales to Indonesia is the fear that such an action will negatively affect civilian sales. Yet the question for Canadians must be at what point do moral concerns intrude on economic issues? Considering that Indonesia is directly responsible for 200,000 deaths in East Timor, Canadians may wonder just what scale of state violence is necessary before their government's moral-outrage threshold is exceeded, and action, besides a hesitant statement at the Human Rights Commission, will occur.

There is great political pressure in Canada to improve the domestic economy. On the other hand there is a not insubstantial constituency which seeks to see that Canada work to improve the human rights situation in the world. Both these objectives are legitimate, yet moral values dictate that economic improvement cannot be sought at any cost. Canada's policies toward Indonesia are an example of economic interests winning out over human rights objectives. However, what seems apparent, is that if there is a strong interest community related to a potential recipient of Canadian aid or arms then the government will be more careful to consider human rights concerns.

Relations with Indonesia have spread across a broad spectrum of Canadian institutions, including many universities and NGOs. Mirroring their government, the Canadian academic community has generally been silent over East Timor due to a desire to protect programs and research grants in Indonesia. Several universities have established lucrative multi-million dollar contracts with the Canadian International Development Agency,

the umbrella organzation coordinating aid programs and business promotion, and the Indonesian government to supply technical expertise on issues such as transmigration.

Canada's mainstream media has ensured that the great bulk of Canadians have never heard of a place called East Timor not to mention its brutal reality. As was the case when the Jewish Holocaust was in progress, our leaders and elites are well informed about the true state of affairs in East Timor however their judgment about the national interest dictates that they not inform the average person. The issue, therefore, is not that Canadians are ignorant over East Timor, but why are they so ignorant and who benefits from such ignorance. Unquestionably, because of this mass ignorance, groups which benefit from Indonesia's political and economic climate have had free rein to influence Canada's foreign policy towards Indonesia.

Mr. Chairman:

The once colonized acting as a colonizer is all too common to modern history. The USA is a good if exceptional example of a colonized country which freed itself first from foreign rule, then from dependence on foreign capital, to become in turn a colonial and imperial power. Indonesia as well provides a classic example of the once colonized acting as a colonizer. However, if in the past the alternative to colonial expansion by one power was not freedom for a territory but colonial expansion by another power, this was not the case for East Timor in 1975--as it was not the case for Indonesia in the latter half of the 1940's.

Undoubtedly, had this Decolonization Committee existed in the 1940's, Indonesians would have condemned the brutal Dutch imperialism, while belittling Holland's claims that its critics make spurious allegations. And, as with the East Timor case today, massive evidence would have been produced of Dutch violence, with all independent observers condemning the aggressor. Naturally, it would have surprised no one that Holland's officials would have supported Holland's aggression.

Indeed it is a tribute to our times that there is an intergovernmental forum in which a powerful colonizer can be condemned for retarding the process of self-determination of a militarily weak people who lack the auspices of a major power. The essence of law is that the powerful and the weak are to be judged by identical principles. The only factor which matters is

that the East Timorese are human beings; this fact alone entitles them to the entire range of human rights.

Mr. Chairman:

If Canada were to live up to its human rights rhetoric it would use its significant economic ties to Indonesia, and its respected international reputation, to actively lobby for the withdrawal of Indonesian forces from East Timor to be followed by a referendum in which the East Timorese People can decide their own future. Indonesia may be a strong and wealthy state but it needs Western and Japanese trade, investment and loans to remain as such. Its refusal to even discuss East Timorese rights is made possible by the near-complete lack of pressure from the major outside powers.

Because one is responsible for the reasonably foreseeable consequences of one's actions, it is the duty of complicit states to right the wrong done to the East Timorese People.